

One Woman's Work

.....Written for the.....
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By STELLA E. ASLING.



AS Empire Day again approaches we are able to see some of the fruitage of the seed which one woman patiently sowed. "Thought is a marvellous gift and a great mystery, and metaphysicians obscure wisdom by words in vainly attempting to describe and analyze it." A Columbus thought, and a new continent burst upon the world's view; an Edison thought, and the human voice is transmitted hundreds of miles; a woman thought, and the vast dependencies of a grand old Empire were more firmly welded together. But it is doubtful if Mrs. Fessenden, the originator of Empire Day, realized the results which would spring from one seed-thought, when on June 6th, 1896, her little grand-daughter, Kathleen Trenholme Fessenden, was made an honorary member of the Wentworth Historical Society in recognition of the loyal service of her ancestors, and when in the glow of enthusiasm which lit the child's face she had a vision of a day when all the children of the Empire might be so stirred by their identification with a worthy past. "If the new life and aspiration that came to this one child might come equally to all children, what a tremendous influx of national energy there might be with the next generation." Three years later this vision was realized. From Halifax to Vancouver tens of thousands of loyal, enthusiastic people, old and young, gathered in city and town to send greetings to their Queen, and in song and story to live over again the chivalric days of the past, and Empire Day had become a reality.

Following out the thought which had come to her on June 6th, Mrs. Fessenden presented her idea to the public through the press. In a letter to the editor of the *Mail and Empire* she said: "We all realize it more or less that we owe it to our children, the inheritors of our loyal and patriotic past, that they should go forth to life's battle, strong in every loyal impulse, nerved by every patriotic sentiment, not only to sustain for Canada her present proud position, but to win for her a still higher place among the peoples of the world. We can in a great measure provide for this in our educational system, by so teaching our literary, constitutional and social history, and imparting such knowledge of our laws and their obligations, and the public duties of our citizenship, that this life of our children as developed in our schools shall have its roots in, and take its sentiments from, our Canadian nationality and no other. One means suggested for a further development is the setting apart of a patriotic or flag day, in which all the school exercises shall centre in Canada, and when we may gather up, so to speak, the patriotic fragments of our school year for a right loyal feast—a day when our history, past and present, may be unrolled with becoming dignity and ceremonial; a day when our national hymns and patriotic songs may be heard, and our hearts

set aglow with the recital of the heroism of our United Empire Loyalist fathers, and our sons live over again the Homeric age of Canada."

Having such a worthy object for its basis, it was no wonder that the idea found favor with all true patriots. Hon. G. W. Ross, Minister of Education, and others in high places, furthered the organization, and Hon. George E. Foster, M.P., at the first monster meeting in Montreal, said: "The very sound of the words [Empire Day] made us feel that we were not only the citizens of Canada, but the loyal subjects of a great and good Queen, and the proud citizens of a grand old Empire. What history it teaches! What a vast deal it meant to the children now before him, and to the older ones as well! Thirty years ago the children of that time were the children of Prince Edward Island, the children of New Brunswick, of Ontario, of Quebec. Now all this had been swept away, and to-day they were the children of the Empire. Empire Day meant the progress of the Anglo-Saxon people. It meant the peace, freedom, and security of the wide world."

The fame of Empire Day soon spread across the seas. It was lauded by the English press



it evoked commendatory letters from Lord Meath and Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary for the Colonies, and was brought before the British Parliament. Nor has the fame of Empire Day stopped with the British Isles. From far-off Australia enquiries have come regarding the day and the originator. And there now lies before the writer the March number of *The Veldt*, an African journal, which contains a short sketch of Mrs. Fessenden's work.

It may be an incentive to those who are engaged in similar work, and have met only with discouragement, to know that Mrs. Fessenden worked incessantly for two years before her idea gained recognition. During that time she displayed rare powers of patience and persistence, in pleading before school boards, in addressing historic and patriotic societies, in writing numberless letters to the press, in communicating with school inspectors and those engaged in educational matters, and in submitting her scheme to the dignitaries of State. But she has now received her well-earned laurel.

Some one has asked: "Why was there for so many years so much purely passive loyalty in Canada?" Why is there so much demonstrative loyalty to-day? Is it not due to the work of the press, the platform, the pulpit,

the parliament, and because in the thoughts of the people, in the texts of the school, we have been better informed upon the great Imperial possessions, and the blessings all races and creeds enjoy under the Union Jack? And while Empire Day is observed in the Public schools there will be little danger of a return to a "purely passive loyalty in Canada."

Mrs. Fessenden has not confined her work to Empire Day, but as Convener of the Flag Committee of the Ontario Historical Society, has done much towards inculcating loyalty to the flag. She is also Corresponding Secretary of the Wentworth Historical Society, Secretary of the Fessenden Chapter of the Daughters of the British Empire, Curator of the Dundurn Castle Museum, and the author of a brochure, "Our Union Jack," a copy of which was graciously accepted by Her late Majesty Queen Victoria.

Mrs. Fessenden is the widow of the Rev. E. J. Fessenden, B.A., late rector of Ancaster, and sister of Mr. N. W. Trenholme, K.C., late Dean of Law, McGill College, Montreal, P.Q. Her eldest son, Prof. R. A. Fessenden, has a continental reputation as an electrician and scientist.

An Absent-Minded Sky Pilot.

MR. RALPH CONNOR, author of "Black Rock" and "The Sky Pilot," is a hard-working pastor in Winnipeg, and has a personality as unique as it is little known. Among his most marked traits are indifference to fame, sympathy with Nature, and a lack of a sense of time. When he began his present pastorate his parishioners were repeatedly astonished when he failed to appear at the hour designated for special gatherings. More than once the governing body of church dignitaries was obliged to adjourn without transacting the business of the hour, because the brilliant young pastor had become so wrapped in dreams that he had continued his stroll or his canter, forgetful of the special meeting and of all else save the wild charm of the rugged scenery and the abstract speculations of the novelist.

Gentle hints and remonstrances from the pillars of the church completely failed to reform the minister and bring him to a realization that time is the essence of earthly appointments.

At last, however, a shrewd parishioner devised a makeshift which has succeeded admirably. He suggested that all appointments be named to the minister as being for a time thirty minutes in advance of the hour actually fixed for the gathering.

Under this arrangement the shepherd generally has time to forget the appointment, remember it, and then enter his appearance before the final moment arrives on which he is to appear before his flock.

He is devotedly loved by his people and particularly by the rough men of the ranches and the mines. These find themselves instantly in touch with the "sky pilot" and are his chosen companions. Mr. Connor is a dashing rider and finds his main recreation in the saddle.

"FAME," said the youth with the earnest intellectual expression, "is so hard to attain! It is so difficult for one to get himself talked about!" "Humph!" rejoined the woman with cold blue eyes and a firm jaw. "You just ought to live up in our neighborhood."